

THE UMMO LETTERS: ET CONTACT OR HOAX?

Nearly 40 years after a select few people in Spain started receiving letters allegedly from ETs visiting from the planet Ummo, the controversy continues but no hoax has yet been satisfactorily proven.

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SPAIN, mid-1960s – Some people start receiving letters with strange contents. The authors introduce themselves as ETs, but add that they should not be believed; they pretend to have been studying our civilisation for a decade, and wish to communicate with a selected group of individuals in order to give information about themselves, without disrupting our social network. They require that the information should remain within restricted circles. Hoax or encounter of the third kind? Some say the story is not over...

The Ummo file, or Ummo case, as sometimes referred to, is one such that arouses either dismissal with a condescending snigger or incentive to plunge into it and wind up gasping for fresh air. Suffocation is a real risk, as there are more than 1,400 original typewritten pages (a total of 3,850 pages which the Ummites declare having sent throughout the Earth) of technical descriptions, scientific, psychological, philosophic or spiritual developments, with drawings and calculations. Thousands of sheets have been sent to different countries, to isolated addressees, chosen on mysterious criteria. The whole thing has been on for nearly 40 years, and might still be going. According to the "Ummophiles" constellation, the real story has not been written—despite claims, comments and conclusions from distinguished ufologists, for whom this is obviously a hoax. For what else could it be but a hoax? Common sense is essentially reassuring here.

However, things are not so simple. If the Ummo story is to be considered only from a sociological point of view, its real interest remains unnoticed. And what makes this story so interesting is certainly not the paranoia, mythomania or mere excitement conferred on it by its alleged alien origin, but the actual content of the letters.

Today the known texts are on the Internet, and what better place is there to remain unnoticed—because *they* do not wish to be believed. Yes, they are here among us, like an *X-Files* episode, but they do not wish to disrupt our already so heterogeneous and disturbed social network with a massive announcement, the "proof" of their presence. The problem is that this argument goes back to the 1960s, and many are weary of waiting for contact. Surely enough, we did not make much progress, and our inclination for "inter-destruction", as they might call it, is still marked, meaning war and all forms of violence and coercion. That is why, according to some people, they are still around: task forces taking turns, with maybe fewer individuals, but continuing their studies of Earth's humanity and communicating on a sporadic basis with some "chosen" persons. The risk is indeed high that the latter might consider themselves "chosen". Who would not be glad to have a "nice" ET contact, even through correspondence?

CONTENT AND TONE OF THE LETTERS

If the letters' content is so "enthraling", though not to everyone's mind, their form plays a major part. The style is indeed near hypnotic with its impersonality, its descriptive dullness, absence of affection, feeling and humour, with apparently absurd twists and turns used to describe some object or concept which we refer to with a single word. In short, the form is undoubtedly exotic, but could be simulated. However, the letters seem extremely rich in information, dealing in the same cold and rational tone with hygiene on planet Ummo, with their conception of the multidimensional multi-universe, including its non-elementary particles, and even with what we call God. We already have a lot of ideas on this issue, but theirs are still more elaborate!

Indeed, the Ummites appear to be ahead of us, considering a comparison of our evolutionary cycles. They are human beings as well, and not some kind of demigods, they say.

If they visit us, at least we must acknowledge their leadership in science and technology. Their planet is 14 light-years away from Earth, but the journey only requires a few months, thanks to hyperdimensional foldings of which they know how to take advantage. Their spacecraft materialise and dematerialise thanks to their mastery of antimatter and twin universes... But exactly how far ahead of us are they? Their acute sense of ethics, derived from a unified understanding of the universe which unites science and spirituality, is at the origin of the letters.

According to one of these letters, a spacecraft first landed in March 1950 in a low mountain zone in the French Alps. The "Ummite task force" then watched and inspected the surroundings, and went so far as to have a close encounter with a young shepherd, taking advantage of a morphological similarity which makes them resemble the Scandinavian type. Soon realising they had better be discreet, they decided to carry on research and observation secretly.

When they judged that they knew enough about us, they decided to make contact with a few individuals in order to spread information (as a payback for that collected on us), and also to evaluate our reactions to their statements. Thus in 1965, or probably sooner, the first letters arrived, opening with:

"We know the transcendence of what we are about to tell you. We are aware that such a statement could only come from a joker, a mentally ill person, or some journalist or advertising executive aiming at exploiting it for his own profit. When some news item escapes the usual framework of veracity, and in the absence of ways and means to check its reality, any balanced and intelligent mind has the right to, and should, adopt a sceptical attitude. Bare testimony should not be accepted, even less when its origin is unknown and thus open to deception. For us, what we are going to tell is true. But according to all logic we cannot ask you to believe such amazing affirmations. We admit that we would do the same if we were you..."

Then, further on, they write:

"We come from a planet whose verbal or phonetic formulation could be transcribed as: UM-MO [in Spanish, (U)MMO]".

They then proceed with scientific data concerning distance, mass, size and many other things about their planet and its inhabitants. The tone is set: the letters will henceforth have this sort of neutrality and precision, and will be filled with scientific and technical data, sometimes calculations and formulas, often drawings. In fact, each letter's content is adapted to its addressee. The recipient is sometimes confronted with a 40-page document.

MAKING SENSE OF THE DOCUMENTS

In Spain, the first "official contact" to receive such a letter is Fernando Sesma, in Madrid, in 1965. This man is interested in esotericism and UFO stories, and claims that at the time he was in actual contact with ETs. He periodically gathers a small group of amateurs in the basement of a famous café (León), a room called "The Merry Whale". As new letters come in, motivations and methods of these dispatches can be pieced together.

The Ummites claim to have sent documents in the first place to high-ranking scientists in different countries, including Spain, to arouse their curiosity. Having encountered polite but clear rebuttals, they then tried another strategy. They decided to focus on people more open to these questions, and to search for UFO amateurs, journalists and writers. Soon a group gathered around Sesma in the Merry Whale Room for readings of Ummite documents. Letters sent at the time to several countries had been indiscriminately posted from anywhere on the planet.

A few weeks after the first dispatch to Sesma, a sighting took place in Aluche, near Madrid: a spacecraft landed, and the story was told by local press. Another sighting subsequently occurred in similar conditions in San José de Valderas in June 1967. These cases have been widely exposed as unsubtle put-ons (see box, "Faked Photographs?"), yet marks and objects were left...

In 1975, Jean-Pierre Petit, a French engineer, learned about the texts. He is one who has lent credit to the Ummo story, in France

and beyond, through several books he has written on the subject. J.-P. Petit studied the scientific material in the letters, particularly everything that concerns the structure of the universe, antimatter and other information that led him to develop what is called the magnetohydrodynamic (MHD) propulsion mode. Some of his work is published in peer-reviewed journals in physics and astrophysics and presented at international conferences. Showing both nerve and humour, he even goes so far as to mention an Ummite sender in one article's references! Then, in turn, Petit started to receive letters. One of them is published in his most recent book, *UFOs and US Secret Weapons (OVNIs et Armes Secrètes Américaines*, Editions Albin Michel, Paris, 2003), demonstrating that he is still at it. [See his website, <http://www.jp-petit.com>, and article in *Science News* 9/05; Ed.]

But Petit, who is an excellent populariser, has a strong personality and denounces the Spanish group's propensity to hold almost in reverence those "blond beings from outer space" and to obey, though not always "to the letter", the strict conditions required by the

Ummites concerning the spreading and collective readings of the documents. Later they explain that they conducted an experiment on the level of acceptance of brand new ideas in a given network... Petit will not rest until he has a real contact!

HOAX THEORIES

Up to this point, the file is inextricable enough, and almost everything has been written or said on the subject. The hoax thesis prevails and comes in many versions, blaming students, scientists, spies, CIA agents, KGB, etc.

That was up until that day in 1993 when Luís Jordan Peña, who is linked to the story with the sighting in Aluche, admitted that he'd set it all up—though he later retracted this admission in private, saying that "they" told him to confess. Eventually, in 1998, he reconsidered his assertions but said he had acted with the helping hand of "a North American organisation"!

French journalist Gildas Bourdais, brought around to the hoax

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thesis, gives a surprising answer to the question, "Why?" According to him, this huge manipulation was aimed at discrediting ufology and making fools of ufologists through a faked contact. [See his article posted at website <http://www.ufocom.org>; Ed.].

Could such an expensive and complicated program, involving only a group of about 30 Spanish contacts, have been put up to get to this point more than 30 years later? Building up such an elaborate plan over such a long period would maximise the risks. And why should anyone aim at holding ufology up to ridicule if it were not to hide the fact that UFOs are real? A venture like this then appears to be as disproportionate as it is hazardous, and unnecessarily sophisticated.

Furthermore, the letters are not particularly pro-American, as Gildas Bourdais notes, but neither are they pro-Soviet. Never short of arguments, some ufologists suggested a manipulation from the CIA, when the letters were hard on the Soviet system, taken up in turn by the KGB to criticise the United States through the Ummites!

One can see how this reasoning seems scarcely economical and how some would resort to any mental contortion to contrive motivations for what can only be a huge hoax.

Hoax or real fact, each version remains an hypothesis as long as it has not been proved. But today, this story has become such a puzzle that one might contend oneself with pulling a few threads one by one, hoping to gather a mere body of assumptions. Bourdais acknowledges, for his part, that this "file" is totally "apart" in ufology.

ATTEMPTS TO DECIPHER THE LANGUAGE

Recently, a new major element has been brought to the file. The Ummite letters are sprinkled with ideogram-like "words" of their own language, for which they give an equivalent in Spanish (e.g., "OYAGAA" for "the Earth").

A lexicon has thus been established and some inquisitive minds have tried to break the code of this language, matching it with languages labelled by Europeans as "exotic", such as Chinese, but without success. Unsurprisingly, as part of a hoax the language would have been meaningless.

The words appear as sequences of letters from our alphabet, often doubled or tripled within each word, hence hard to pronounce.

In 2002, under the pen name "Jean Pollion", a scientist published a book (*Ummo: de vrais extraterrestres*, Aldane, Cointrin, Switzerland, 2002) in which he claims he has cracked the code. It should be pointed out that this Ummite language is supposed to be the "first level" in their communication mode, as their science in fact relies on a four-valued logic, whereas we use third-excluded logic, i.e., with two values (every claim is either true or false; see the problems caused by this in quantum physics, for instance).

FAKED PHOTOGRAPHS?

The sighting in San José de Valderas (1 June 1967) started at about 8 hrs 20 pm and lasted for 12 minutes. According to Luis Jordan Peña, several witnesses, including two photographers with cameras, watched the whole scene. Each photographer handed over his film anonymously to the local press. Those famous pictures have been analysed by several teams, including one led by Claude Poher, who was then a CNES executive (CNES is the French National Centre for Space Studies). It was just before he founded, in 1977, the GEPAN which later became the SEPRA (Study of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena) [see *Twilight Zone*, NEXUS 6/06; Ed.]. Today, Jean-Jacques Velasco runs this unit in Toulouse. He recalls his involvement in the analysis:

"Two major elements allowed us to say the pictures were fake. Using the original photograph, we conducted a geometric and 'densitometric' analysis. Both show that the object is very close to the camera. With silver-based emulsions, the contrast response reveals the object's distance. Secondly, the microscopic analysis down to the grain shows a 'break' above the object, a vertical line that we identified as a nylon thread (supporting 'two plastic camping plates stuck together'). Put together, these elements allow to conclude in favour of a model."

It would thus be a crude special effect, as confirmed by other analysis, though not all reliable. Poher mentions the thread in interviews, but his report published in March 1977 in the *Infoespace* journal does not mention it. Perhaps the analysis took place later. The same year, William Spaulding from Ground Saucer Watch in Phoenix (Arizona) analysed the pictures with a computer and claimed he had detected a thread. A team of Spanish investigators, led by Carles Berche, reached the same conclusion in 1994.

However, the pictures still have supporters, who claim that Claude Poher, after first calling, in Madrid, Rafael Farriols and Antonio Ribera (who had given him the pictures) to tell them that the analysis was very positive, subsequently published negative results. Manipulation of the original films is suspected. The negatives are supposedly in possession of the ufologist Juan José Benitez, who would have "borrowed" them a few years ago. Until his death, Ribera declared that the pictures were genuine.

Benitez called on the services of the Guardia Civil for a new analysis, with the apparent conclusion that the thread is in fact a scratch on the negative...

Another line of thought is to consider that the pictures are indeed a forgery intended once again (by the Ummites) to discredit the whole case. In his first book on the subject, Jean-Pierre Petit supports this idea (real-fake pictures) and an Ummite letter seems to have confirmed this. Indeed, if the pictures are too beautiful to be genuine, maybe they are also too beautiful to be false...

Moreover, he says that using this "first level" language they can communicate through telepathy.

Jean Pollion thinks he has revealed the system behind these terms. After many cross-checks and years of work, his hypothesis is that the sound of each letter is meaningful in the term. Thus he identifies 17 "soundcepts", whose arrangement in a given order produces the signification of the vocable. For example: "A" stands for "truth, action, effectiveness"; "D" stands for "expression, form, appearance"; "E" for "mental image, perception, sensation, idea", etc. Even if a conceptual shoehorn is sometimes needed to follow Pollion, his model seems fairly functional. It allows reconstitution of an elementary language, essentially descriptive and devoid of "object words" as we use them. The Ummites describe their first-degree language as basic and functional. Higher degrees enable handling fewer "objective" concepts, like scientific or spiritual ones.

A DIALOGUE ON THEORETICAL PHYSICS

Since Jean-Pierre Petit has explored the cosmological side, let us take a look at the highly complex case of elementary particles.

However, to avoid stepping into that complexity, it might be

AN UMMOPHILE'S VIEWPOINT

André-Jacques Holbecq, a retired *Concorde* pilot and author, is one of the contributors gathering the pieces of the Ummite puzzle, with passion and a lot of humour, too.

"Our activity is crystal clear; there are no secrets," he explains. "The website and discussion list are open to everyone. We must be realistic: the Ummo file seems very coherent and consistent to us, but there is still room for doubt. It should not be approached with 'blind faith', otherwise one loses all objectivity to make investigations. In the end, even if this is a put-up by some Earthling, he would still have to be a bit of an ET to have done it, so the file remains a wonderful invitation to think, with a lot to chew over.

"For the time being, we think we have gathered nearly all the originally 'spread' letters. Maybe other people in the world have information they withhold for some reason or other. It is the huge scientific content that makes the documents so interesting. One finds all along genuine information as well as misinformation, but mostly concerning details and "odd" aspects of their presence on Earth. This is meant to shed disbelief on the whole case, making it more difficult to apprehend.

"If their presence is real, then, from their point of view, it would seem logical to spread information but simultaneously make sure that no one could gather all the elements liable to constitute clear evidence of their existence. The misinformation acts as a means of control over the spreading of information. It would require police enquiries and huge means to trace it all back. However, on the scientific scene, perhaps some discoveries will confirm or invalidate their sayings..."

interesting to make some comparisons. I have collated, in dialogue form, sentences extracted from 1966–1967 Ummite letters (quoted as "U") and combined them with quotations from a recent book, *Beyond Space and Time: The New Physics (Au-delà de l'Espace et du Temps: La Nouvelle Physique*, Le Pommier, 2003), by Marc Lachièze-Rey, a theoretical physicist and astrophysicist from the French National Centre for Scientific Research. He tries to sum up what today's research in physics is all about (his quotations are represented by "P"), and the extracts concern the conception of the universe and its elementary components.

U: "The contradictions observed by you in relativistic physics and quantum mechanics are the product of an original defect. They are the consequences of basic and fundamental mistakes in concepts."

P: "Relativistic description neglects the internal properties of matter; quantum description neglects gravitation (space-time geometry)."

So far, nothing much surprising, since anyone interested in physics circa 1966 would have known this.

In another extract, the Ummites mention their concept of an "elementary component", which we refer to as "Z".

U: "We will explain the concept of Z, which must never be confused with the concept of a geometrical or mathematical point, elaborated by Earth's physicists as an abstraction with no physical reality."

P: "From the concept of point originated the most important difficulties in physics... Non-commutative geometry considers spaces with no points... The first advantage established by the string theory (in the 1980s) is that interactions are no longer localised as points in the space-time continuum."

The idea of a no-point geometry was proposed in the 1930s, but

formalised only a few years ago. Thus we are talking about highly specialised concepts for 1966, but it is getting even more puzzling.

U: "You should only replace 'space-time continuum' by 'discrete (discontinuous) set of Z.'"

P: "We would like to consider a space-time which is discrete and not continuous."

P and U really seem to agree !

U: "For us exists what is called space-time...but immersed in an N-dimensions framework."

P: "Conventional cosmological conception does not allow us to see our space-time as immersed in something else. But in recent theories (superstrings and branes), our space-time is indeed immersed in something wider: the sub-space, a sort of back-world... Our space-time represents only a part of the universe."

U: "Our cosmos is what you call a space-time continuum; we need 10 dimensions to define it mathematically."

P: "[In the superstring theory] the space-time is replaced with a variety which has a high number of dimensions (10 or 11), called the "subspace"... Five different kinds of superstring theo-

ries (all in a 10-dimension subspace) have been discovered in the years 1970–1980."

U: "[Z definition] As a first conceptual approximation, we could say that it is a bundle of oriented axes. The least important about such a bundle are precisely the axes (mathematical fictions), with respect to the angles formed by the axes."

P: "Fundamental objects of physics are not particle-points but one-dimensional "strings", or even objects with arbitrary dimensions (branes). Those theories are close versions of a more fundamental theory, still unknown."

U: "Any particle (electron, meson, graviton) is precisely a Z which is oriented in a way distinct from the others."

P: "Two strings in those states appear as two different particles."

U: "What you call subatomic particles, with different attributes of mass, charge and spin, are nothing but multiple orientations of one same Z."

P: "Whether it is in a quantum state or another, the same string (from the subspace) appears in our world; for example, with a changing mass. To put it another way, we would see different particles."

This list of similarities of ideas, even in their formulation, is far from complete in terms of elementary particles. So, is the superstring of our super-physicists the "Z" of the Ummites? We have not reached that far yet, but the analogies are striking.

The hoax thesis in such conditions implies the complicity in 1966 of high-level physicists—or clairvoyant ones! Jean-Pierre Petit once said that string theory is "a swindle". Maybe he has changed his mind.

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UMMITE PREDICTIONS

Two examples illustrate that the level of complicity is the same in other fields, such as biology and medicine. The Ummites warned us in the 1960s against the systematic use of antibiotics liable to induce resistance in germs—a problem which we have only become aware of in the 1990s. Furthermore, the Ummites claim in their letters that the water contained in the cell can carry electromagnetic signals—precisely what Dr Jacques Benveniste apparently discovered, making him famous and banned at the same time for his "water memory" theory.

These are topics of a more serious kind than quibbles over sociological interpretations of the "Ummo mystery" or the genuineness of photographs—without, however, underestimating such questions.

The story exhibits numerous elements of coherence, right up to elements of misinformation—intentional mistakes—inserted into the texts in order to thwart an overly "easy" identification of their origin. As for global scepticism about ETs, this is gradually lessening as we move on. Some

people still make investigations and try to assemble the puzzle (see box, "An Ummophile's Viewpoint").

But an important question remains. It is interesting to wonder why the concept that ETs may have infiltrated among us seems so irrational to "common sense" people. On closer look, it could be that this block is itself irrational and subconscious. Indeed, a being coming from space somehow represents our own future, that of interstellar explorer. If we see the being from space as a time traveller, how could he visit us?

This block could be removed by the growing acceptance of the UFO phenomenon among the population. Despite those who see only a myth behind all this, the discovery of numerous planets outside the solar system considerably reinforces the hypothesis of extraterrestrial life and therefore of possible visits. But those planets had to be seen and measured by "our" instruments, "our" calculations, before their existence could be accepted. And yet, there they were!

The Ummite letters mention that we will find traces of multicellular life-forms on planet Mars, where a probe has just been sent especially to look for such traces.

Indeed, in the 1940s, an ET was expected to be a Martian. Nowadays, he comes from farther away but he might be closer to us than we think.

Should we be afraid? According to *them*, no. To undertake such a journey through space, a civilisation must have mastered a "matter-energy" technology that would have led to its own destruction if that civilisation had not transcended its aggressiveness. In light of this argument, any civilisation visiting us can only have peaceful purposes.

Editor's Note:

For more information on the Ummo letters and the controversy, visit the website <http://www.ummo-sciences.org>.

About the Author:

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